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ABSTRACT

By adopting the principles of activist education common to women's studies programs--appreciation of the heterogeneous student population and its varied writing needs; simultaneous study of theory combined with active political work; concern for the personal and the political; and a practice of democratic classroom and administrative processes--progressive changes can be made which are necessary for a truly critical literacy to emerge in society. There are two dominant perspectives in literacy research: "literacy-determinant," emphasizing the important cognitive and cultural consequences resulting from the introduction of literacy into society, and "context-determinant," focusing on the potentialities and restraints which the socio-political/cultural environments and institutions impose on individual attempts to acquire literacy. A third perspective, the literacy-context dialectic, reveals how an inadequate analysis of the function of context leads to an ineffectual pedagogy. Dealing with context requires that educators go beyond the narrow confines of the classroom and recognize complex struggles of power and ideology taking place largely through language in other arenas. In composition studies, a more heterogeneous approach, such as that found in many women's studies programs, can counteract the disciplinary tendency to teach expository prose created for and by a homogeneous population of mostly white male writer-subjects living in the subject-centered world of the patriarchal status quo. (Thirty-three references are appended.) (MM)

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Literacy Theory, Context and Feminist Response

Karyn Hollis, Dickinson College

The renaissance in composition scholarship and teaching taking place over the last 20 years has resulted in significant gains in the areas of theory, empirical description, pedagogical techniques and disciplinary status. Yet we are still waiting to see equivalent advances in our focus of concern--student writing. NAEP scores continue to be depressingly low, and SAT's show only slight improvement. Despite our suspicions and/or assertions that these tests are not entirely valid, most of us would still admit to being all too often disappointed by our students' prose, both in terms of what is written and how--this, in spite of our process assignments, writing-across-the-curriculum programs, collaborative writing labs, and writing-to-learn approaches. In short, the "critical literacy" we envision for our students, the literacy that is reflective and analytical, informed, confident and sophisticated, still seems light years away.

I think that some of the reasons our scholarship and its accompanying pedagogy have not been as successful as we might hope can be found in the research on literacy. In short, this research shows that a very broad notion of context is important for composition teaching since the acquisition of literacy is both a response to, and an influence on, its wider cultural context.

Although more attention has recently been paid to the notion of context in composition studies, too many of these studies are limited to the classroom, or the academy instead of the more primary extra-curricular context. In fact, for the most part, compositionists have deemphasizied the far reaching social, political and economic contexts which have affected the nature of literacy itself while over-emphasizing the ways literacy improves its human subject and through him/her the wider cultural arena. This approach

ignores, as it were, half of the dialectic of interaction between literacy and its social context. Based on the research of literacy scholars, I will argue that the importance of contextual motivation calls for more attention to be paid to the social setting for literacy outside the classroom. In looking for a model of how this can be done, I want to suggest that we consider the feminist approach used in many women's studies programs in which the educational curriculum is explicitly aimed at changing its own context.

Literacy Scholarship

In reading the research on literacy, I began to notice two fairly clear tendencies emerging; I termed the two perspectives "literacy-determinant" and "context determinant." Studies from the "literacy-determinant" perspective tend to emphasize the important cognitive and cultural consequences resulting from the introduction of literacy into a society. They provide a convincing rationale for our pedagogic faith in the power of literacy to transform individuals and societies for the better. Scholars that fall into this group include the early Goody and Watt, Eric Havelock, Walter Ong and A.R. Luria. While these scholars often recognize contextual influences in their studies of literacy, the main thrust and emphasis of their work (or the way others have used it) has been to celebrate the improvements that literacy seems to bring to a society. Jack Goody and Ian Watt were among the first scholars to link literacy to the habits of mind and culture associated with Western tradition when they published "The Consequences of Literacy" (1962-63). In their well-known analysis of the literacy of ancient Greece, they write that the genesis of an alphabetic writing system "was more than a mere precondition of the Greek achievement; it influenced its whole nature and development in fundamental ways" (352). To support this assertion, they

present a multitude of accomplishments which they attribute to literacy: the development of abstract thinking, a linear concept of time, logic, syllogistic reasoning (332), and the distinction between history and mythology and science and superstition (332-37). Because reading and writing are essentially private activities, argue Goody and Watt, individuality in thought and literature have become the norm (345-46). Furthermore, the existence of large numbers of well-read individuals has led to the possibility of a democratic system of self-government (338).

Claims for actual mental transformations occurring in the wake of literacy were published at the same time by Eric Havelock in Preface to Plato. Comparing oral and written communication in a discussion of Plato's Republic, Havelock asserts that different modes of thought emerge from each (142). Oral communication unifies consciousness in its assumptions of shared knowledge and context while written language forces abstract operations which separate reader from the text, developing self-consciousness (208), and provides the basis for the replacement of "imagistic representations by true concepts" or abstractions (189).

In a later work, Havelock continues his praise for the achievements of Greek literacy, even arguing that morality owes a debt to literacy because preliterate societies were "in a conceptual sense nonmoral." Ethics and law as they are understood today ("as verbalized structures stating principles and describing applications") came about "as a result of a change in the technology of communication", i.e., the acquisition of literacy (8).

In Orality and Literacy, Walter Ong joins the chorus of praise for literacy. "More than any other single invention, he states, writing has transformed human consciousness" (79). Furthermore, Ong claims that complexly elaborate analyses and causal explanations common in scientific or

scholarly studies are not possible until the mind has interiorized writing ("Reading" 186-187).

As a source of empirical evidence for such assertions, Ong cites the work of the Soviet psychologist, A.R. Luria. Luria compared literate and non-literate peasants performing various cognitive tasks. He found that the illiterates seemed to unable to deal with abstractions, and relied on situational rather than categorical thinking (68). They were very context-bound and only with great difficulty could they go beyond their immediate experience. They also had difficulty grasping the logic of the syllogism (103) and in providing their interlocutors with verbal definitions. Luria, however, places his experiment in the context of the Soviet social and cultural revolution, and believes his results show proof that cognitive processes "vary as the conditions of social life change" (161)--a more dialectical perspective than other scholars give him credit for.

The Context-Determinant Perspective

While for the above scholars the acquisition of literacy seems undoubtedly connected to positive changes in individuals and societies, another group of literacy scholars focuses on the potentialities and restraints which the socio-political/cultural environments and institutions impose on individual attempts to acquire literacy. It is the work of this second group of scholars, including Goody's later work and that of Kathleen Gough, Harvey Graff, and John Oxenham, which reveals why our classroom approaches are not as successful as we would like them to be.

In his 1968 anthology of ethnographic studies, Literacy in Traditional Societies, Goody modifies his literacy-determinant position to grant more influence to context. He states that his original article "should perhaps have

been entitled the 'implications' rather than the 'consequences' of literacy. . ." (4). He points out that many societies mentioned in this later group of studies did acquire the alphabet, but remained in a state he calls "restricted literacy." Learners of the Koran in the Gonjan society, for example, were not permitted to investigate or interact with the text in any critical way. Thus, literacy became a conservative force in this society, safeguarding the power of a small group of imams.

Much to his credit, Goody has included essays critical of his early work in his anthology. Kathleen Gough, for one, argues against many of his earlier claims. Studying the literacy of ancient China and India, she concludes that widespread literacy does not necessarily lead to the separation of myth and history. Indian culture, concerned with other-world reality, kept its myths and did not produce histories, geographies, accurate measures of time or abundant new knowledge in physics or chemistry (77). Gough also points out that in neither China nor India did literacy lead to the separation between science and the supernatural as Goody claimed it had in Greece. Rather, she believes that cultural and economic factors which separated mental and "practical" workers were what actually prevented the development of modern natural science (79). Furthermore, widespread literacy did not lead to democracy in China or India. In India, Gough reports that the most democratic assemblies were found among the illiterate castes. Gough concludes that literacy is an enabling rather than a causal factor of cultural development.

Harvey Graff, in his book <u>The Literacy Myth</u>, concurs with Gough. He states that neither "writing nor printing alone is an agent of change; their impacts are determined by the manner in which human agency exploits them in a specific setting" ("Literacy Past and Present" 307). This conclusion

is based largely on the research he did on the personal literacy experiences of immigrants to three 19th century Canadian cities. He did not find a direct correlation between level of literacy and individual or social achievement, mobility or economic development. Rather, the value of literacy "depended heavily on other factors, from ascribed social characteristics such as ethnicity, sex or race to the institutional, social, economic and cultural contexts in which it was manifest" (The Literacy Myth 19). Graff writes that not everyone who was literate accrued special benefits from the skill, and on the other hand, not all illiterates were disadvantaged. In many instances, Graff notes, literacy reinforced social hierarchies and became a conservative force for order.

In another social, political and economic account of literacy based on extensive fieldwork and and scholarly research, John Oxenham provides further support for the influence of context on literacy. He found that literacy, reading and writing, is used by most people as a means to an end, as a tool, and that literacy, therefore, will only be acquired to the extent that it is necessary for successful daily living (61). If an individual perceives little benefit to be had from mastering these skills, he/she will most likely not bother acquiring them. "It would follow then that any pressure to promote literacy should accompany some larger purpose" (6)--perhaps this explains the great success of the Cuban and Nicaraguan literacy campaigns. Like Gough and Graff, Oxenham believes, "that the presence and utilization of literacy depend on the nature of the society in question" (7). "In some societies, literacy has been used chiefly to maintain. . . the status quo. Elsewhere it has been a major tool for new thinkers, inventors, revolutionaries" (108). In other words, where the present social environment is oppressive or one fearful of change, literacy will not become a stimulus for

innovation or intellectual creativity. On the other hand, a society which values speculation and supports a critical attitude toward established authority may engender critically literate citizens (53, 66).

A Dialectical Perspective

Rather than siding with the scholars of the literacy-determinant or the context-determinant perspectives, I believe that a dialectical approach proves more useful.[1] Convincing evidence and arguments show that literacy both affects and is affected by its wider cultural context. Curiously, both empirically based studies on literacy which I reviewed take such a dialectical perspective.

I have already reported on the experimental findings of A.R. Luria. The other empirical study I looked at was conducted by Sylvia Scribner and Michel Cole in an attempt to distinguish between the influence of literacy and schooling on the individual (factors they believe Luria's experiment conflated). Among the Vai people of Africa, they found that literacy as well as schooling has some identifiable cognitive consequences, but in no case did they find "deep psychological" differences between schooled and non-schooled literates (251). The schooled literates did seem better at meta-linguistic activities in which they talked about talk or writing, but the authors conclude that it is not possible to claim that either schooling or literacy stimulates growth of overall cognitive ability. Rather, cognitive consequences are highly specific and closely tied to actual social practices. Scribner and Cole stress that other life experiences, such as moving from a rural to an urban environment, seemed to be the deciding factor in ability to perform abstracting functions.

The Literacy-Context Dialectic and Composition Scholarship

A brief look at some major studies and theories in three areas of composition scholarship--composition or rhetorical theory, composition pedagogy and the psychology of composition--will reveal how an inadequate analysis of the function of context leads to an ineffectual pedagogy. Consider for example, one of the most frequently applied models of the discourse situation, Jakobson's diagram of the speech event. He explained his model this way. Speech events are composed of six main constitutive factors: Addresser, addressee, message, context, contact and code. If a verbal message is found to focus primarily on one of the six factors, that focus constitutes the main function of the verbal message. He diagrammed the situation like this. (Functions are in parenthesis.)

Context
(referential)

Message
(poetic)

Addresser (connative) ——— Addressee (emotive)

Contact
(phatic)

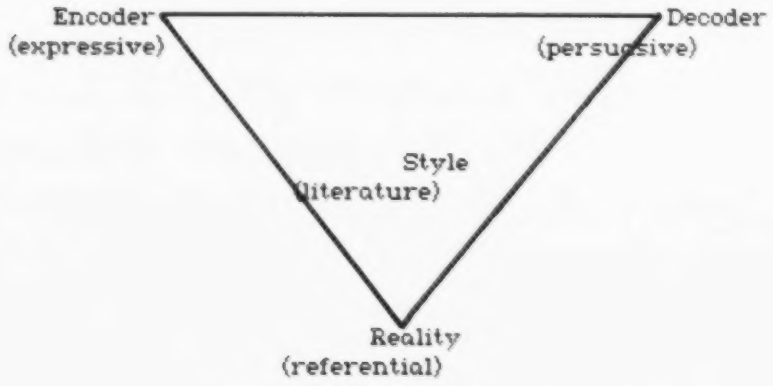
Code
(Metalingual)

In composition instruction, the factor labelled "context" does not usually refer to the pressures of external social realities and power relationships or even internal psychological ones, but rather to the linguistic referent, the signified, or in other words the subject matter for writing. In her widely used text, A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers, Erica Lindemann writes that in the Jakobson model

". . . we can define 'context' to mean an entire world of subject matter or topics which writers develop into messages" (14).

Students are often taught to analyze discourse in the above terms without the slightest indication that the notion of a pure signified, i.e., an objective reality beyond the interested power plays of discourse, has been greatly undermined by feminist and post-structuralist critiques. Instead, students are typically taught to focus heuristically on each component of the speech act to find ways of writing more effectively. For example, in writing a letter to the editor, the student is taught to examine the stylistic and organizational requirements of the type of "message" being sent; facts and evidence about the subject matter--"context"--would be chosen according to their supposed effectiveness with a particular "addressee" or reader; the persona the whom "addresser" or writer projects in the text would also be thoughtfully constructed. While this use of the model provides much helpful information, it leaves no place for the influence of contextual factors to be evaluated. Thus, the context bound nature of language and literacy is not illustrated by Jakobson's model.

The same point can be made about the rhetorical triangle. As Kinneavy has presented it (19), the communicative act has four components:



There is a dominant function associated with each component as in Jakobson's model, but Kinneavy assumes that "aim is embodied in the text

itself" (49) and influences all other elements of the discourse. Kinneavy qualifies this assertion with the warning that one must take into account "the qualifications of situation and culture" (49), but there is likely no mention of such qualifications when the triangle is offered to students as a means of discourse analysis. An objectivist theory of text is by its very nature acontextual.

If Graff and others are right, and the value and effectiveness of literacy or discourse for individuals depends on personal characteristics such as age, sex, race, or class as well as contextual ones such as access to formal and informal power structures (Literacy Myth 19) then students must be led to examine these factors in their use of discourse. Certain "letters to the editor" carry more weight than others--why? Certain "subject matters" command great attention in the news media and editorial columns; others are ignored--why? What can unempowered writers do to make up for the inadequacies of their words? Unless these and other considerations are also taken into account in discourse analysis, we won't be addressing the problem of ineffective writing at its roots.

Much composition scholarship in pedagogical technique and theory also slights context. As James Berlin notes in his article, "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," the "current traditional" model, still by far the most popular, denies contextual information so totally that it seems calculated. Berlin explains that in this type of writing instruction, truth is assumed to exist prior to language, which is considered a socially neutral code. Such an approach denies the context-constitutive or social nature of language and knowledge. Students are urged to efface their psychological and social concerns as writers in order to perceive without bias an unobstructed empirical reality. The audience is to be as "objective" as

the writer, both divorcing themselves from the interests of language, society and history (769-770). Berlin writes that in this way, writer, audience and language are subservient to the "myth of an objective reality" (777). In other words, a common context is assumed for every writer and reader, despite their very different personal, social and economic situations. Since language is context-constitutive, i.e., it both shapes our perceptions and constitutes at least part of the reality that we perceive, students should be made suspicious of writing in its logocentric quests for context-stripping ultimate truths. Berlin asserts that we do our students a disservice if we continue to propagate notions of language and reality that even the empirical sciences no longer subscribe to (777).

The area which I call the psychology of composition has probably been the least concerned with context. Studies of the composing process and cognitive functions of writing predominate here. For the most part, researchers in these areas have chosen to concentrate on the acontextual mind of the writer (as if there were such a construct). The early exception to this tendency was Janet Emig, whose pioneering case study of twelfth graders' composing processes revealed that students felt a stronger commitment to self-initiated or "reflexive" writing than they did towards school-sponsored or "extensive" writing. Students also spent more time on reflexive writing (91).

Later researchers chose not to continue studying these different context-dependent composing processes and have focused almost exclusively on careful analysis and description of a very decontextualized composing process. Studies by Stallard (216), Pianko (20) and Perl (330), for example, show that better writers plan more, write longer and revise more. Perl's less skilled writers were hung up on mechanics (333). Sommers'

inexperienced writers had no holistic concept of their papers, and revision didn't carry over from draft to draft (383). Sommers also assumed that certain sequences of activities in the revision process should be common to all writers, i.e., differences in ability to revise. However, in similar research on revision, Faigley and Witte did not find a best way to revise (412). They noted much variation among revision strategies and concluded that the best methods were those that adapted the writing to its larger rhetorical and situation contexts.

The assumption that all writers could share a common revision or composing process again implies that all writers share a common context for writing. This simply not true. The unequal status among writers regarding their personal psychologies, cultural and economic captial and prior exposure to literate conventions makes for differences in the composing processes that this acontextual research does not explain. In all of the previous studies, some writers were much more highly motivated than others, and as a result, were much more willing to spend time perfecting their writing. What was responsible for this difference in attitude? The theoretical underpinnings of most of this research doesn't usually lead researchers to even pose the question.

This blindness to experiential context and the social and psychological power structures involved in language production also leads to an emphasis on form and technique (or process) over contexnt. What a student writes becomes less important than how he/she actually goes about writing it. This process myopia has led to some very impressive models of the composing process, but the critical literacy we desire for our students is neglected in this research. I do not wish to suggest that we abandon composing process research, for it has helped us to dispel much superstition about the act of

writing. But the questions it leaves unanswered are crucial. Writing as a context-directed activity is not the same across contexts, and, therefore, acontextual research probably distorts as much as or more than it clarifies.

Pedagogical Implications

Although most of us teach from what I have termed a literacy-determinant perspective and believe strongly in the beneficial effects of learning to read and write, we need to recognize that there is more involved in this process than we have so far acknowledged. Perhaps we are reluctant to consider the larger cultural context in which classroom literacy takes place because of the daunting nature of any attempt to affect the "real world." Nevertheless we cannot expect a more critical literacy than that which currently exists, unless we concern ourselves with both sides of the literacy-context dialectic. We must help individuals become more critical readers and writers in the classroom, and we must work in the wider social arena to encourage a cultural context that allows for more than passive acceptance of the status quo--a status quo which offers too few opportunities for meaningful prose from most citizens.

In the United States today, we have a context in which most people use their writing skills only for simple lists, order forms, tax returns and personal letters. In her study of the black Tracton community, Shirley Brice Heath concludes that "there are few occasions for reading of extended connected discourse and almost no occasions for writing such material," (Ways With Words 198). In the white community of Roadville, the "notes and letters of Roadville women are the longest connected texts written by adult community members" (217).

Literacy scholarship reveals the connection between the minimal opportunities for writing provided by our society and the minimal practice of literacy by our citizens. Indeed, the numbers of U.S. illiterates and functional illiterates are growing. Nationally, 29% of all high school students drop out before graduation. The statistic is 50% in urban areas. In the economic realm, the problem lies in the types of jobs that are presently being created. They are low paying and require few skills. Those fortunate enough to land jobs in the much touted "service sector" know that the opportunities for writing at Burger King are quite limited. The rest linger in illiterate unemployment. The far reaching systemic origin of the problem is revealed by the range of other statistics. It is estimated that 23 million adults are functionally illiterate and 45 million are only marginally literate. In other words, 68 million Americans or one third of the adult population have disfunctional reading and writing skills--too large a number to blame the problem on individual inadequacies.[2]

As far as college graduates go, here is Erica Lindemann's bleak assessment of the literacy requirements awaiting them in the world of work.

> We tell college students they must write well to complete job applications when they graduate, when in fact someone in the personnel office most likely will fill out the forms for them. Some of our students will become members of highly paid professions without learning to write well. Lawyers often consult books of sample letters and briefs rather than write their own. Politicians outline their speeches along certain lines but leave the actual drafting to paid staff writers. Members of other professions do not compose letters, memos, or reports in written form; they dictate them. Sales reports, requests for parts and services, countless business transactions, are usually completed by filling out pre-printed forms. Although our students cannot escape all writing, many of them (more than writing teachers want to think about) do get diplomas, degrees, and jobs without needing to write much or well (4).

In the political realm, things are just as bad. Opportunities for the average person to practice literacy for civic ends are all but nil. Until these contextual impediments are acknowledged and addressed, it is not likely that literacy skills will improve.

Dealing with context requires that educators go beyond the narrow confines of the classroom and recognize complex struggles of power and ideology taking place largely through language in wider arenas. How can we begin to work to change the wider cultural arena in which we teach? I think that the feminist pedagogy practiced and preached by many (but not all) women's studies programs offers a curricular model appropriate for writing programs.[3] In fact, Catherine Stimpson, women's studies scholar and now Dean of Graduate Studies at Rutgers University, has said that women's studies programs "are nurturing a virtue that all of United States education must imitate."[4] This virtue, a heterogeneity of concern which affirms the vast differences, as well as the similarities, among women in terms of class, nationality and tribe, religion, age, race, and sexual preference, has been acquired through painful struggles for recognition within the women's movement. Ultimately however, this celebration of difference has given the discipline an experiential understanding of what is crucial in the lives of women. In composition studies, a more heterogeneous approach might counteract our disciplinary tendency, recently documented by feminist writing scholars, to teach a "master discourse," i.e., expository prose, created for and by a rather homogeneous population of mostly white male writer-subjects living in the subject-centered world of the patriarchial status quo.[5]

Women's studies programs have often been able to combine the study of theory with concrete political action, action aimed at changing this status

quo. Since their beginnings, many programs have been acutely aware of their contradictory standing as institutionalized subverters of the establishment and have been quite up front about their no less than revolutionary goals: the liberation of women through the analysis of their oppression and search for collective solutions. In light of the evidence from literacy studies, I think we also need to acknowledge the necessity of working for a context that values our students' individual identities and offers opportunities for their thoughtful written participation in ways that are socially meaningful.

First of all, feminist women's studies programs have attempted to involve both faculty and students in practical, activist work for social change. Scholars may do studies in conjunction with women's political groups, rape crisis centers, or unions. Student assignments also frequently involve "real world" research. In an anthology on feminist education, Learning Our Way, Nancy Schniedewind describes her "Collaborative Action Project" in which a small group of students researched, wrote and distributed a booklet on the legal rights of women in New York state.[6] Projects like these for our students and ourselves would help bridge the present gap between the study and practice of literacy in schools and that in the wider world of jobs, communities and inter-personal psychologies.

Similarly, the familiar rallying cry of feminist activists to unite the personal and the political becomes a pedagogical practice in women's studies courses. After reading feminist theory, for example, students are typically encouraged to reflect on their lifestyles. Along with the theory of patriarchy, students might discuss their own family interactions. These might then be connected to problems of the local school board or even of multi-national capitalism. Theories of sexuality from Freud to Daly are examined in

women's studies classrooms for their relevance to more political concerns: government involvement (or lack thereof) in birth control, reproductive rights, day care. Discussions of economic theory might lead to reflection on women in the workforce, on equal pay for equal work. Shouldn't our discussions of style or rhetorical theory lead to equally practical, contextual and personally compelling issues? Who does the most writing in our society? Why? Why has the linear, expository esay become the norm for academic writing? Who feels comfortable with this form? Who doesn't? Should there be room for other prose models in the academy? What jobs involve the most or the least writing and why? Who typically takes which jobs? Why are so many government documents hard to read or hard to obtain for that matter? Who reads and writes insurance policies? Discussing these and other similar questions would surely help students link our rhetorical theory with the literacy skills they need to attain a satisfying and fuller life in our society.

Another cornerstone of feminist pedagogy has been its attention to classroom process in the effort to break down traditional hierarchies among teachers and students. Small group discussion, collaborative approaches to learning, and student-centered teaching are mainstays of this approach. Compositionists have been receptive to these ideas since the 60's, and we are currently experiencing a revival of these techniques at the urging of Freire and Bruffee among others. We should continue to offer these models of non-hierarchical collaboration in hopes that our students will turn to these techniques when they leave our classrooms.

Women's studies programs also call on these democratic and participatory forms of interaction in their administrative structures and include representatives from community groups, clerical staff, students, and the campus women's center on their coordinating boards. Shouldn't

composition programs widen their focus of interest and connections to local governments, newspapers, unions, businesses, neighborhood groups, and legal clinics, for example? In so doing we might find supportive friends able to provide some of the literacy opportunities we want our students to have. Furthermore, discussions with such a group might provide us with sources of information about "real world" writing needs as well as lead to a a greater public understanding of the context-dependent nature of literacy.

By adopting the principles of activist education common to women's studies programs, i.e., an appreciation of our heterogeneous student population and its varied writing needs, a simultaneous study of theory combined with active political work, a concern for the personal and the political, and a practice of democratic classroom and administrative processes, we would stand a greater chance of influencing the wider context which is currently so detrimental to the development of critical literacy skills. An active participation in the political avenues open to educators is also essential to this endeavor--avenues outside as well as inside the CCCC and NCTE. Literacy scholars have provided the evidence which shows why an effort to politicize these organizations is imperative (as if any interaction with language and discourse could be apolitical). Those of us in the the Progressive Composition Caucus and other activist groups in the CCCC often take this kind of approach. We have urged the CCCC to take stands on wide-ranging political issues that affect the context in which we teach. For example, we have encouraged and supported Geneva Smitherman in her struggle against "English Only" legislation and we have put forth resolutions against U.S. aid to the contras and CCCC investment in South Africa, for holding conventions at union hotels and for greater CCCC democracy.

In spite of our meager resources, time and energy, as professional educators we must, finally, call for the redistribution of cultural and economic capital which, ultimately, is the only way to address the problems discussed here and to insure more opportunities for thoughtful exposition from all our students in their professional and political lives. I urge you to work in schools, the CCCC, and the wider political and social arena for the progressive changes which are necessary for a truly critical literacy to emerge in our society. As the research on literacy has shown, without an environment conducive to thoughtful written analysis and in which such an analysis from all citizens can be socially significant, we will not likely be able to motivate critical literacy in our classrooms.

Notes

[1] Brian B. Street in Literacy in Theory and Practice has proposed a similar dichotomy for models of literacy which he terms "autonomous" and "ideological." He praises the ideological model for many of the same reasons that I praise a dialectical approach. In fact, our studies are quite complimentary. His critique is aimed at the pedagogy of adult basic literacy while mine is concerned with more general composition scholarship and pedagogy.

Beth Daniels has more recently written "Against the Great Leap Theory of Literacy," (Pretext 7 Fall/Winter 1986: 181-193) arguing for a dichotomy similar to the one I discuss here to discredit the notions of Thomas Farrell and others who claim "that literacy actually causes thinking (186)."

[2]"Literacy, Your Community and Its Workforce." A National Teleconference. June 23, 1987.

[3]Two good examples of such programs are at San Francisco State and SUNY Buffalo.

[4]Stimpson, Catherine. "The Idea of Women's Studies, The Ideas of Women's Studies: An Assessment." Paper delivered at the Pennsylvania College Consortium, Dickinson College, January, 1987, 7.

[5]For a further description and analysis of the weakness of this approach, see Pam Annas, "Silences: Feminist Language Research and the Teaching of Writing," as well as other essays in the excellent anthology, Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender and Equity. Eds. Cynthia L. Caywood and Gillian R. Overing. State University of New York Press: Albany, 1987, 3-19.

[6]See Charlotte Bunch and Sandra Pollack, Learning Our Way. Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1983, 270.

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